

place of St. Basil. It is located Northeast of Ankyra, from which it is two hundred fifty-six meters distant. It is situated at an altitude of 1,095 meters above sea level on the Northern foothills of the dormant volcano of Mt. Argaios [Erciyas Dagi, in Turkish]. This is a famous mountain of molten rock in Cappadocia and the highest in Asia Minor (4,000 meters). Indeed, it is said that when the weather is clear, one can see the Black Sea and the Mediterranean from its peak.

Hypothesis III

*That one should not be idle, but undertake
physical labor, too; and that idleness
is the cause of many ills.*

A. From Palladios

It is said that, as he was approaching death, the holy Pambo said to the Holy Fathers who were present: "From the time that I came to this desert and constructed my cell and settled here, I spent not a single day without doing my handiwork; nor do I recall ever eating bread given to me by someone else."

2. From the Same Author

I was at one time in Galatia,* where I stayed for some time with His Grace, Bishop Philoromos, an extremely ascetic and very patient man. St. Gregory the Great was very taken by him, gratified as he was by the man's austerity and the care which he showed in his work. Even now, at eighty years of age, he has not put aside his pen or his calligraphy book. This blessed man said: "From the time that I was Baptized to this very hour, I have never eaten bread that was given to me by another person; instead, from what I make toiling at my handiwork, I give twenty coins to the lepers."

He went by foot to venerate the tombs of the Holy Apostles in Rome, Alexandria, and Jerusalem. He made this journey twice, paying his own expenses, in order to venerate the Saints and receive their blessings. He also told us this, for our benefit: "I cannot recall ever having taken my mind off of God."

3. From the Same Author

On Mount Nitria,** there is a large Church; near it a guest house was built. In this guest house, hospitality was offered throughout the year to any stranger who wished to stay close to the monks, and no one was evicted, if he did not wish to leave on his own. Guests were allowed to stay for one week without working; afterwards, however, they were assigned to work, whether in the garden, the bakery, or the kitchen, or were given books to study; and they were not permitted to interact with anyone until the sixth hour. And all of them wove linen cloth by hand, so as not to be a burden on anyone.

B. From the Life of St. Evthymios

St. Evthymios the Great told his disciples that those who forsake the world and worldly things must take care to be obedient and humble, not to follow their own wills, and to endure at all times any weariness that might arise from their handiwork and labors, and the latter, above all, if one is young and is thus strongly confronted by fleshly assaults, on account of his age. Now, aside from great caution, it is needful, beyond this, for one to exhaust his body with great hardships, so as to yield easily to what is sensible and to extinguish, little by little, the flame of youth—and thus to imitate the Apostle Paul, while, at the same time, applying his precepts: not simply avoiding the sin of inactivity, by which an idler is judged unworthy of his very food—because, he says, “If any would not work, neither should he eat”—, but acquiring the same hands as Paul: “These hands,” he says, “have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me.”***

For it is most unseemly that, while laymen not only feed themselves by their work—and, as well, their wives, their children, and their whole household—and pay their yearly taxes, but offer to God the first-fruits of their la-

bors,*** giving alms, in accordance with their ability, we should not be able to share in common with others the fruit of *our* work.

C. From the Life of St. Savvas

When the great Father Savvas was yet a young man and was living in the Monastery of Flaviana, his hands were never idle; whenever they were not lifted up towards God, then noetic prayer was his labor, out of fear that, at even the slightest interruption in mental concentration, the Enemy might secretly distract him and make his appearance. Thus, for him, virtue was lighter than a feather, and he served all of the brotherhood, numbering about seventy monks, with obedience, humility, and all of the other Evangelical accomplishments. Later, having departed from there at the will of the Superior, who gave him a blessing to leave, he went to Jerusalem. There, he met St. Evthymios the Great, who, as was his custom, was present at the gathering of the monks; Savvas, falling at his feet, tearfully begged, entreated, and implored the Saint that he might also become one of his rational sheep and be shepherded by him, along with the other monks.

St. Evthymios the Great, who was a superb instructor to his sheep, having, furthermore, acquired experience over the years from their struggles, did not allow him to reside with the others in the monastery. For he saw that Savvas was still young and thought that perhaps his desire was just the result of some temporary impetuosity and lacked the seriousness of deep reflection. Thus, he allowed him to participate in the whole of the monastic life, exactly as it is prescribed, but outside the monastery. But even after this period of testing, he said:

“My child, it is not seemly, because of your age, that you should live within the monastery. This is neither beneficial to the monastery nor does it do you any good. But if you wish to heed my advice, place yourself in submis-

sion to Abba Theoktist, to whom I am, of course, very close, in the institution just below us, and you will prosper greatly."

The blessed Savvas was obedient to all of this, because, aside from other things, he had learned obedience; moreover, he promised, with great eagerness, to fulfill what St. Evthymios had instructed him to do.

"For this is what I want," Savvas answered, "and it is for this reason that I took refuge with you: that I might, by your aid, be saved."

St. Evthymios thus sent him to the blessed Theoktist and ordered the latter to look after him well. "Because," he said, "I have seen that the Grace of the Spirit is pouring out over Savvas richly, and that, before a great period of time shall pass, the whole universe will be overwhelmed by his fame." This, of course, eventually happened, in fulfillment of St. Evthymios the Great's prediction.

So, this Divine Savvas, becoming a disciple of the blessed Theoktist, gave himself over with complete sincerity to God and was overcome wholly by Divine desire. And knowing that he was of a dual composition (that is, made up of soul and body), he set forth to double his asceticism: sometimes racking the body, sometimes the soul. Thus, he passed his day with bodily labors, while at night he kept vigil with prayers; sometimes he would haul water, and at other times he would carry wood, and in this way, in his assiduity, he surpassed all of the others, whatever their obedience. For he was distinguished for his gallantry of soul; and he was also noble of body and truly robust. On his own, he undertook other obediences; in fact, he assumed the care of the mules. Despite this, he went before everyone else to the gatherings in the Church and left last, eagerly taking part in the Divine Liturgy. And by all of these things, he added to his life, as Divine capital, obedience and self-control. For this reason, his spiritual state invited amazement from the vast array of

monastics, that at such a young age he was adorned with the crown of the virtues and perfection.

D. From the Life of St. Loukianos the Hieromartyr

St. Loukianos the Great, even when he was still young, leaned towards the monastic life. Thus, very early on he turned away from all of the fleshly pleasures and gave himself over to fasting and unceasing prayer. In this way, within a short time he succeeded in rendering his flesh such that it did not trouble him. He busied himself with tachygraphy [stenography]; and whatever he earned from this work he used for his food and for alms to the poor. For, he thought it wrong if he tasted of his own food without the poor first taking their part out of what he had earned.

E. From the *Gerontikon*

1. Abba Ammos and Abba Bitimios once visited Abba Achillas. It was very early, and they found him working, plaiting rope. They asked him to direct a few beneficial words to them, and he replied:

"Since yesterday evening up to this time, I have been plaiting rope at full pace, though, in fact, I do not need to do so much work. However, I am working thus, lest God find it necessary to chastise me, saying, 'Why, despite the fact that you are able, do you not work?' Therefore, I labor with all of my strength."

The Fathers were benefited by these words and departed.

2. A certain brother went to Mt. Sinai to visit Abba Silouan. Seeing the brothers there working, he said to the Elder:

"Labor not for the food which perisheth: for 'Mary hath chosen that good part' (St. Luke 1:41-42)."

Ὁ ὉΓΙΩ ΝΙΚΗΑΝΟΣ
ὁ ἱερομάρτυρ :-



Instead of responding, the Elder said to his disciple, Zacharias: "Give the brother a book and take him to his cell, where he is to have nothing." The brother, of course, did this.

Now, when the eleventh hour was approaching, the visiting brother continually had nothing but the door on his mind: "Maybe they are sending someone to call me to eat."

However, after an hour had passed, and no one had called him, he got up, went to the Abba, and said:

"Did the brothers not eat today, Abba?"

"Of course," the Elder answered.

"Then why did they not call me?" the brother asked.

"Since you are a spiritual man," the Elder replied, "you have no need of such food; since we, however, are fleshly men, we want to eat, and therefore we work. You, however, have chosen the better part. You studied all day and do not now need to eat fleshly food."

The visiting brother, on hearing these things, made a prostration to the Elder and said:

"Forgive me, Abba."

And the Elder responded to him:

"In any case, Mary has need of Martha, too, since it was on Martha's account that Mary was praised."*****

3. A certain monk worked on the Feast Day devoted to the memory of a Martyr. On seeing this, another monk said to him:

"Is it permissible to work today?"

And the former answered him:

"On a day like this the servant of God was torn to pieces, tortured, and withstood martyrdom; yet I should not work at such a menial task?"

4. Someone once asked an Elder, who was plaiting a rope and did not even lift up his head from his handiwork, "What should I do to be saved?"

And he answered:
"Behold, just what you see."

5. Another Elder went to the side of a river, where he found a thicket of cane. He sat down, cut away stalks from the bank, plaited some of them into rope, and then threw the ropes into the river. He did this until others came and saw him. He then immediately got up and went his way. He was not working because he had to, but to be occupied and so that his thoughts might remain at peace.

6. An Elder said: "When you get up in the morning, say to yourself: 'Work, body, to nourish yourself; soul, take vigilant care, so as to inherit eternal life.'"

7. The following incident is told of Abba John the Short: Once, when he was young, he told his senior brother: "I would like to be carefree, just like the Angels, who do not toil, but who continually worship God." And taking up his monastic mantle, he left for the desert. He stayed there for a week and returned to his brother.

When he knocked at the door, his brother heard him from inside, but said, before opening it:

"Who is it?"

"I am John, your brother," he replied.

"John became an Angel and is no longer found among men," his brother answered from within.

But he persisted and begged: "It is I," he said. Despite this, his brother did not open the door to him, but left him to brood until morning.

After this test, the brother opened the door and said to him: "You are a man and you still need to work to earn your keep."

So, John made a prostration to his brother and said to him: "Forgive me."

8. An Elder said: "The sluggard and one who does not wish to work God does not want."

F. From St. Ephraim

Brother, do not be negligent in your handiwork; for, often your mind will give birth to the thought that you will supposedly not be able to learn some craft, "You are," it will tell you, "weak and lazy, and you are unable to withstand the pain that it takes to carry out this work. Look, every part of your body aches from fatigue, because you are not used to being exhausted. So, get up and go back to where you were. And there," your mind tells you, "if you but fear God, you will be saved."

Now, do not be conquered by such thoughts, but be patient with the Lord, Who called you to His Kingdom. For He has told us: "In patience possess ye your souls" (St. Luke 21:19) and, "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you" (St. Matthew 17:20). So, my beloved, let us be patient; for, we place our hope not in man, but in God, Who saves all those who hope on Him.

Perhaps, beloved, one has no need to endure struggles, in order to learn to read and write? If you learn a worldly trade, will you not likewise have to endure toil? If, then, you endure for these things with long-suffering, is it not fitting that you should have to withstand all things for the sake of the Lord? For even the Scripture says: "For thou shalt eat the labor of thine hands: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee" (Psalm 127:2, *Septuaginta*). And the Apostle exhorts us: "Let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good," so that not just the laborer will have to eat, but "that he may have to give him that needeth" (Ephesians 4:28). Thus, he who hates work is not upright, for idleness manifests much evil, while he who loves works tastes of no sorrow.

Beloved brother, if you should choose piety for yourself, take care, lest, under the guise of piety, the Evil One put in your mind an alien thought; that is, the vain or prideful thought that you need not labor along with your brothers, so as supposedly not to imperil your piety. On the contrary, work, like your soul-mates, and take care for your piety. For idleness destroys piety, and to those who embrace it, it gives a shameful name. Therefore, combine piety and your interest in work, and you will then be truly pious.

Beloved, if you are toiling in the monastery and you become more fatigued than the others, be careful, so that the Evil One does not secretly bring about thoughts in you filled with deadly bitterness, such that you say to yourself, "I am carrying out work that is worth a great salary, and yet my food is nothing," and thus ask for more, or different, food than the other brothers, and therefore for the sake of food annul the work you have done for God. For if you think about such things, you are not walking in accord with love. Whenever you ask your reward from men, you lose that of God.

Now, since you await your recompense from Him, do not desire those things which are offered to you by men. It is better to humble yourself before your brothers and be joyful, anticipating rewards that will be given by the just Judge. Who will give to each his reward according to his works and Who said in this respect: "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord has made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, that he shall make him ruler over all his goods" (St. Matthew 24:45-47).

I also know a brother who said: "I will pray to God to give His blessing to my handiwork, so that the monastery might be supported by it; for, this would give me great joy, and I would thank God all the more, Who said: 'Inasmuch

as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me' (St. Matthew: 25:40)."

Yet another brother toiled greatly in the monastery and, on account of this labor, suffered greatly from temptations. He, however, answered these thoughts of his with the following words: "You cantankerous servant, you have been warred against; what more can you do?" So, the Lord granted him comfort and gave him courage.

Blessed is the monk who keeps the commandments of the Lord and continually attends to the following three: devotion in prayer, work, and study. For the Holy Scripture says: "Be still, and know that I am God" (Psalm 45:11, *Septuaginta*); and again, "I am poor and in troubles from my youth" (Psalm 87:17[16], *Septuaginta*); and finally, "And in His law he will meditate day and night" (Psalm 1:2, *Septuaginta*).

Beloved, if you are living in a cenobitic monastery with brothers, be of humble mind, serving your brothers in all things, such that your good behavior also leads to what is good in those who find themselves in the monastery after their formerly wretched lives. When they shall see you so, they too will come to prepare their souls for the work of the commandments. Therefore, when the Superiors order that you submit to some work together with the brothers, eagerly run and do not wait for another to get there before you; neither have dealings with those who are lazy, who damage themselves by their laziness and who are thus greatly injured. First of all, they are worthy of condemnation for their disobedience, selfishness, and sluggishness; besides this, they lose any reward for their labors; and thirdly, and more importantly, they give reason to others for complaining, backbiting, and disobedience. They will render an account to God, Who will judge them for the spiritual damage done to others.

You, then, brother, must pay them no heed; for, no one ever says at harvest time: "Since my neighbor is not reaping wheat for himself, neither will I reap wheat for my-

self." But on the contrary, every person, whenever he has the time, gathers food for himself and for his animals, so as not to be in need when winter comes. If, then, we take such care for the things of the flesh, should we not, all the more, pay attention to spiritual things? If, again, you are ill in body and cannot work as the other villagers do, you sincerely show your best intention, and those who see your illness and your weakness will lighten your load. Nevertheless, you do not allow them to take the whole burden from you, but entreat them with the words: "But I want to do my part along with you." And you work with them, with all the power that the Lord has given you, and thus gain great recompense from God.

C. From Abba Isaiah

Brother, take care not to ignore your handiwork with the excuse that you are observing a commandment of God, but attend to it with the fear of God, so that you do not fall to sin without knowing it. When you are learning various handicrafts, express your doubts to the one who is showing them to you, but do not permit yourself to say continuously to him, "Brother, do me a favor and see if this is all right or not." If you are dwelling with another brother and he is doing some extra work, do some work yourself, taking part in his labor, so that your conscience is at peace and so as not to cause distress to your body. At no time, however, should you ask to learn the handicraft of your brother, whether he has more work than you or you more than he. Occupy yourself exclusively with your own work, and the fear of God will dwell in your soul. For idleness is death and misleads the soul.

H. From the *Gerontikon*

1. Abba Makarios the Great once went to visit Abba Anthony on his mountain. When he arrived, he knocked

on the door of his cell. So, Abba Anthony came out of his cell and said: "You—who are you?"

"I am Makarios," the visitor replied.

On hearing this, Abba Anthony went inside and, having closed the door, left Makarios outside. After some hours, seeing his patience, Anthony opened the door and said graciously: "After hearing of you, I have for a great deal of time wanted to meet you." And, indeed, he exhausted Father Makarios with his hospitality. When evening approached, Abba Anthony soaked *thallia*,• that is, young branches of palm, for his handiwork.

"Allow me to soak some, too," Abba Makarios said to him.

"Soak," Abba Anthony answered him.

And putting together a large bundle, he soaked them in water. They then sat down together the whole night, speaking about the salvation of the soul and plaiting; and their woven ropes reached from the opening down into the cave. As dawn broke on the cave, the blessed Anthony saw the length of Abba Makarios' rope and said: "Great power comes forth from those hands."

2. The heresy of Messalianism•• does not allow its followers to labor. These heretics teach that one must pray continuously and despise work.

I. From St. Ephraim

O monk, do not offer as an excuse for idleness the fact that you are ill, for Holy Scripture says, "Thou hast granted him the desire of his soul..." (Psalm 20:2, *Septuaginta*).

Brothers, let us not scorn the Grace of God, which grants us the strength to work good; indeed, with this power let us work good and continually thank Christ. In Holy Scripture, it is written: "Labor not for food which perisheth, but for that food which endureth unto everlasting life" (St. John 6:27). Make your hands to labor to do

good, so that he who has need of bread will have it and so that your heart might be ceaselessly devoted to the Lord; for then you shall truly work for that nourishment which remains everlasting, and not for that nourishment which is lost together with the body. So, labor not to find rest—that is, so as to manage to live without work—, because idleness betokens great evil.

* Galatia was a province in central Asia Minor. The Galatians settled it in the third century B.C. St. Paul visited Galatia and preached the Gospel there, during his second missionary journey. To the inhabitants of this province, who, as we noted, became Christians very early on, St. Paul addressed his Epistle to the Galatians.

** Nitria, which is one of the most renowned cradles of Christian asceticism, is a valley in Egypt, located about one hundred ten kilometers Northwest of Cairo, towards the Libyan desert, and called by the Egyptians Ouad Natroun, that is, the Natroun Valley. In this valley, there were around ten dry saline lakes (fed underground by the Nile River), which, when the river flooded, were filled with water, though during the rest of the year they were completely dry. In ancient times, large amounts of salt and calcium nitrate were taken from them during the flood season, for the better mining of which processing stations were built near the lakes to facilitate the fuller collection of the aforementioned products from them.

During the era of the First Ecumenical Synod (325 A.D.), Abba Ammonios the One-Eared, who is considered the first dweller in the area, established the nucleus of what was thereafter the famous establishments of Nitria, on account of the fact that more than five thousand monks, and quite a number of the great ascetics and Fathers, were monks in that region. Today there are many remnants from the ruins of these ancient hermitages in Nitria. There are also remnants of newer monasteries; and there are four functioning monasteries preserved to this day, though they are Coptic.

*** The Apostle Paul, as is well known, so as not to be a burden to the Christians, and in order to meet his living expenses, labored as a tent-maker (Acts 20:34; II Thessalonians 3:10-12; I Corinthians 4:12).

*** Things that are offered to God—chiefly from the fruits of the earth—even before men enjoy them are called "first-fruits." This custom is very ancient, dating from the pagan era, and it spread to all peoples. First-fruits were also required by Hebrew law.

In the New Testament, the term "first-fruits" simply means the beginning, or first fruits, of spiritual life in Christ. Our Lord, for example, is called "the first begotten of the dead" (Revelation 1:5), "the firstborn from the dead" (Colossians 1:18; cf. I Corinthians 15:20-23), and His Resurrection is the beginning and, at the same time, the guarantee of the resurrection of all the dead: "Even so in Christ shall all be made alive.... Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's" (I Corinthians 15:22-23).

The custom of first-fruits was maintained in Christian worship; there is a special prayer preserved in the *Ecchologion* from the first centuries of Christianity, with the title, "Prayer read over those offering the first-fruits of autumn." However, in order to safeguard the sacredness of the Mystery of the Divine Eucharist, already from the period of the Holy Apostles the Third and Fourth Apostolic Canons forbade honey, milk, strong drink, birds, any living things, or legumes, "with the exception of new sprouts of wheat [*chidra*] and grapes at the appropriate season," to be offered on the altar ("chidra" was the name given to fresh grains of wheat, crushed and removed from the husk). In its Forty-fourth Canon, the Synod of Carthage repeated this prohibitory Canon with slight concessions. Finally, the Sixth Ecumenical Synod completely forbade the offering of first-fruits, except for new wheat and grapes, within the Holy Altar.

After these prohibitions, first-fruits were placed outside the Church or were sent to the homes of the Bishops and Priests; however, it has slowly become the custom, once again, to bring them into the Church, in front of the Altar (*Berna*), where the appropriate prayer is read and they are distributed to the Faithful as a blessing. In Greece, this custom is normally observed on the Feast of the Transfiguration (August 6), when grapes are brought to the Church, blessed by the Priest, and distributed to the Faithful.

**** The story of Martha and Mary is related in the Gospel episode in which Martha, the sister of Lazarus, welcomed Jesus, when the Lord went to their village, that of Bethany. Martha

endeavored in every way to look after Jesus, while her sister Mary sat at the feet of the Lord and listened to His teaching. Martha then complained to Jesus that her sister had left her alone to tire her out. Jesus said, in response, "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things, but one thing is needful; and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken from her" (St. Luke 10:41-42).

- *Thallia* are the shoots of palm trees, which the Fathers used for producing rush-mats, baskets, etc. They would first split these shoots, soak them in water, and then plait them into ropes or long strands. Since baskets (*zenbilin*) were produced in this way, *thallion* also came to mean *zenbili*.

- The heresy of the Messalians surfaced in the second half of the fourth century in Mesopotamia. Soon, however, it spread to Syria, Asia Minor, Thrace, and Egypt. The Messalians were inclined towards mysticism and asceticism, and for this reason they made a great impression on the monastic brotherhoods. The Messalians were indifferent when it came to religion, and they did not belong to any particular religious group. They had only a vague belief in one God, the Creator of the world, Whom they worshipped in their homes, which they called "prayer houses." They grew their hair long and lived together in mixed communities. They rejected work as evil and supported themselves through begging.

The Messalians spent their time in assiduous and continuous prayer, believing that man is saved in this way; they despised the Mysteries and Rites of the Church. The Messalians survived for many centuries, and in the eleventh century thriving Messalian communities still existed in Thrace.

In the fourteenth century, St. Gregory Palamas visited a Messalian monastery and, after much effort, succeeded in delivering many of the senior members of the community from their error.

Hypothesis IV

To what end a monk should work and for what amount of time, and what kind of work he should perform.

A. From the *Gerontikon*

1. Once, several brothers visited a great Elder. The Elder asked the first brother:

"What work do you do, brother?"

"Abba, I plait ropes," he answered.

"May God weave a crown for you, my child."

Then he asked the second brother: "And you, what do you make?"

"Rush-mats," he replied.

"God will strengthen you, my child."

In turn, the Elder asked the third brother: "And you, what work do you do?"

"I make sieves, my Elder."

"God will protect you, my child."

Afterwards, he likewise spoke to the fourth brother:

"And what work do you do?"

"I am a calligrapher," he answered.

"You know what is needed," the Elder said in response to him.

Finally, he asked the fifth brother: "And at what do you work?"

"I weave linen cloth," the fifth brother replied.

"In such things I am not involved," the Elder responded.

With these answers, the Elder meant, specifically, the following: The brother who plaited ropes, if he took care, was weaving, together with God, a crown for himself. The brother who was making rush-mats needed strength, since his work was exhausting. He who was making sieves needed protection from God, since he sold them in the villages. The calligrapher had need of humbling his

heart, for this art brings pride to those who are not vigilant. To the brother who wove linen fabric, the Elder said that he had no involvement, since this man was occupied by business pursuits and not with the handiwork appropriate to a monastic. For, if from afar one sees someone supporting himself by making baskets, rush-mats, and sieves, he knows that this is a monastic, because his handiwork is made from a plant and can be burned by fire. But when one beholds a fabric salesman, he says: "Here come the hawkers, since this is a worldly work and is not profitable for very many—monks, that is."

2. Abba John the Eunuch, when he was young, asked a certain Elder: "How is it that you can do the work of God with ease, while we, since we are overcome by fatigue, cannot do so?"

The Elder replied: "We can do this, since we place the work of God first in order and consider the satisfaction of bodily needs totally secondary; while you, on the contrary, give primary significance to the satisfaction of your bodily needs and reckon the work of God insignificant; and thus you get tired. For you do not reflect on the words that the Savior addressed to his Disciples: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God..., and all these things shall be added unto you" (St. Matthew 6:33).

3. A brother questioned an Elder.

"What can I do," he said, "since I am upset on account of my handiwork? I try to plait ropes, but I cannot work."

The Elder answered him: "Abba Sisoës has said that we should not occupy ourselves with work that gives us rest and which pleases us."

4. A brother asked Abba Biare: "What can I do to be saved?"

The Elder answered him, "Go and make your stomach small and your handiwork little, and remain in your cell

without agitation; then you will be saved. That is, live without worry, in moderation, and with self-control."

B. From St. Ephraim

Brother, look after yourself with all assiduity; for the evils of the Enemy are many and diverse, and he employs many ploys. Sometimes the Crafty One brings you sluggishness in your handiwork and attempts to draw you away from your work by disinterest, so that you will become involved in work which is not proper; and having drawn you out of your cell, he causes you to wander aimlessly here and there and to neglect your handiwork. Another time, should you resist him by patience and concentration, he will war with you in a different way; that is, he will inspire in you more eagerness in your work than you should indeed show, through greed and the love of material things, giving you strength to work day and night at your work, so as to interfere, if possible, with your prayer and monastic services. He will induce you to go after everyone else to the gatherings of the monastics for services and to leave first, out of excessive concern for your work. Thus, little by little, he will govern you completely and make you once more a totally earthly creature. For, as Holy Scripture says, "For of whom a man is overcome, of the same he is brought into bondage" (II St. Peter 2:10).

Beloved, as soon as you sense, then, that the Evil One is undertaking to lead you astray, do not obey him, but do all things as they should be done, with moderation, laboring, too, in moderation, so that you are regularly in attendance at gatherings for services and prayer; and the blessing which will come to you through faith will give you strength and Grace in every good endeavor. Let us love temperance and let us only seek after that which is of absolute necessity and not after enjoyment. If we pursue enjoyment and avidity, then our toil shall be great, our path unsteady, our grief inconsolable, and our lives care-worn.

There is need for but one thing, my brothers, as the Lord said: nothing is greater or more valuable than the soul. For this reason, let us seek and take care to make it ready. And let us not spend all of our time caring for the body.

When the body hungers and demands food, let us remember that the soul also has the same need. Just as the body, if it does not take food, cannot live, so the soul, if it does not partake of spiritual wisdom, is dead. Thus, the Savior says that "Man shall not live by bread alone" (St. Matthew 4:4). You, then, like a good manager, must give the food of the soul to the soul and the food of the body to the body. Do not let your soul die, but nourish it with Divine words, with Psalms and hymns and spiritual verse, with readings from Holy Scripture, with fasting, with vigils, with prayer, with tears, and with hope and thought for future good things.

These and things like them are the sustenance of the soul. Take care, brothers, that no one should find you barren; for the Apostle says, "Whatever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." So, one who sows enjoyment, pleasures, and comfort in his flesh shall reap from the waste of the flesh. He who sows prayer, fasting, and vigils in his spirit, the same shall reap eternal life from the spirit. He who does not remain steadfast in his handiwork will find heart-break in fruitless work. A slovenly man works on appointed days of rest and aimlessly wastes his time on workdays. To fail to observe the appointed day and remain indifferent is not a virtue; it is necessary to take heed and to set aside laziness. For, as it is said, "A sluggard when reproached is not ashamed" (Proverbs 20:4).

C. From the *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles*

Let every believing man and every believing woman, having risen in the morning from sleep and having washed, pray; and if there is religious teaching to be had, let them prefer devout words to work.

Hypothesis V

That against which the brothers should take caution when they work together.

A. From Abba Isaiah

1. Brothers, if several of you go out together to do some special task as a group, let each of you pay attention to himself and not to his brother; that is to say, let one not inquire whether the other has done more work than he, or whether he, himself, has done more than his brother. And neither let him teach his brother or give him orders, even if he sees that he is not doing the work properly. Let him not say to him: "You have ruined this work," but let him leave him to do it as he wishes. But if he says, "Brother, do me a favor and show me how to do this work," then let the one teach the other with humility. If, although he knows, the one replies, "I do not know how," and does not teach his brother, he does not have the love of God in him, but is an evil man; and he, again, who is not familiar with the work, let him not be embarrassed to keep saying to him who does know it, "Do me a favor; take a look and see if this is good."

2. If you are working together with others, and one of you causes some damage out of faint-heartedness, let no one reprimand him, but rather rejoice with him.

3. If you are working with someone who is sick, you should not compete with him by wanting to do more work than he.

4. If you are doing your handiwork, make every possible effort not to estimate what you have done or what your brother has done during the course of the week; for, this manifests a lack of monastic formation.